Hamaare baad ab mehfil mein afsaane bayaan honge,
Bahaaren humko dhoondengi, na jaane hum kahan honge;
Na hum honge, na tum hoge, na dil hoga magar phir bhi,
Hazaaron manzilen hon[illegible] hazaaron car-vaan honge.

FILM *BAAGHI* - 1953

AMONG the thousands of caravans, perhaps the only one to have treaded untiringly through the rough and tough paths of times spanning over five decades was the caravan containing more than 2000 captivating and soul-stirring songs of the Baaghi revolutionary writer who enriched them with his romantic and revolutionary thoughts. Yes, the longest and the most successful lyrical journey which had started in the mid-forties came to an end on the fateful night of May 24, 2000, when the Sultan of *Shaayars*, Majrooh Sultanpuri, was seized by ruthless de[illegible]

Majrooh, born on October 1, 1919 in Sultanpur, Uttar Pradesh, was the son of a police constable. After attaining proficiency in Arabic, Persian and Urdu languages, Majrooh wanted to take up a teaching job in some school. However, he abandoned the idea and started taking interest in Unani medicine and wanted to become a Hakim. He practiced as a Hakim for a year or so but his passion for poetry inspired him to take up writing that later on became his profession and brought him lot of fame and fortune. Majrooh came to Mumbai in 1945 for participating in some *mushaiyra* where renowned filmmaker AR Kardar heard his poems and offered him to pen lyrics for films.

Majrooh's first film was *Shahjahan* which had the legendary singing-star KL Saigal playing the title role and Naushad as music director. The success of the film and the immense popularity of his songs like *Gham diye mustakil* and *Jab dil hi toot gaya*, brought him instant popularity. To Majrooh goes the credit for not only popularising the ghazal in Hindi film songs without sacrificing the flow of thought and expression, but also for introducing liberal use of Urdu, without making them sound bombastic. Remember *Gham diye mustakil* from *Shahjahan*?

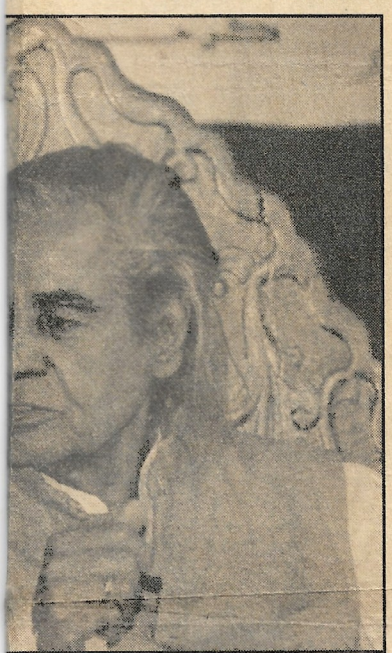
It was his teaming up with Naushad again in Mehboob's *Andaz* (1949) and the popularity of his songs which brought him wider recognition. Despite two major successful films, the Majrooh-Naushad team was not to be a formidable and impregnable one. Majrooh's association with the Progressive Writers' Movement and his Marxist beliefs and ideologies landed him in prison: Majrooh spent two precious years (1950 and 1951) of his budding career in the Arthur Road Prison, Byculla which not only inflicted literary injustice to him but also came in the way of a fruitful lyrical association with Naushad who, by then, had developed a fine tuning with Majrooh's contemporary Shakeel Badayuni. The two-year imprisonment did not mellow down the man and the poet in Majrooh; instead, the incarceration hardened the temperament in the man and thinking in the poet as reflected by one of the satirical couplets he wrote while in prison:

Sar pe hawa-e-zulm chale sau jatan ke saath,
Apni kulah kaj hai usi baankpan ke saath.

with another giant-Ali Sardar Jafri

Majrooh with colleague and relative Navshad

Truly, he could not have kept a more apt pen name than Majrooh which means the wounded. In an illustrious and active lyrical career spanning an unimaginable period of 55 years (the only other artiste to hold this distinction is the melody queen Lata Mangeshkar



followed closely by Asha Bhosle), Majrooh worked with most of the leading music directors and film makers including those belonging to different generations from the same family like SD Burman and RD Burman, Roshan and Rajesh Roshan, Chitragupt and Anand Milind, Raj Kapoor and Randhir Kapoor, Nasir Husain and Mansoor Khan. Majrooh was considered a mascot for many music directors like Khayyam (Footpath), OP Nayyar (*Aar Paar*) Usha Khanna (*Dil Deke Dekho*), Laxmikant-Pyarelal (*Dosti*), RD Burman (*Teesri Manzil*), Rajesh Roshan (*Kunwara Baap*), Anand-Milind (*Qayamat Se Qayamat Tak*) and Jatin-Lalit (*Yaara Dildara*) for whom he wrote at the beginning of their careers and which is said to have brought them success and more assignments.

As an integral part of the Progressive Writers' Association, Majrooh has been honoured with several prestigious awards like the Ghalib Award and the Iqbal Samman Award for his ilmi (intellectual) contribution to Urdu literature. In his parallel movie career, Majrooh has penned film lyrics with equal elan and brilliance and has been honoured with the prestigious Dada saheb Phalke Award for his outstanding contribution to the growth and development of Indian Cinema for five decades.

While penning film lyrics, Majrooh proved his vesatility with both light-hearted as well as poignant and thought-provoking songs. Side by side frothy and fun-loving songs like *Jaane kahan mera jigar gaya ji (Mr & Mrs 55), Paanch rupaiya barah aana (Chalti Ka Naam Gaadi), CAT cat maane billi (Dilli Ka Thug), Baar baar dekho (China Town), Aaja aaja main hoon pyar tera (Teesri Manzil), Jodi hamari jamega kaise jani (Aulad), Piya tu ab to aaja (Caravan), Muthu kulikka varingala (Do Phool), Na biwi na bachcha (Sabse Bada Rupaiya), Mungda mungda (Inkaar), Angrezi mein kehte hain ke I love you (Khuddar) and Papa Kehte hain bada naam karega (Qayamat Se Qayamat Tak)*, for which he got his share of criticism and controversy, Majrooh also came up with sentimental lyrics. As in songs like *Uthaye jaa unke sitam (Andaz), Kahan tak hum uthaayen gham (Arzoo), Sham-e-gham ki kasam (Footpath), Toone mera yaar na milaya (Shama Parwana), Hum hain raahi pyar ke (Nau Do Gyarah), Jalte hain jiske liye (Sujata), Ankhon se jo utri hai dil mein (Phir Wohi Dil Laya Hoon), Mera to jo bhi kadam hai (Dosti), Rehte the kabhi jinke dil mein (Mamta), Hui shaam unka khayal aa gaya (Mere Hamdam Mere Dost), Teri ankhon ke siva (Chirag), Hum hain mataa-e-koocha-o-bazaar ki tarah (Dastak), Tere mere milan ki ye raina (Abhimaan), Ruk jaana nahin (Imteihan), Ik din bik jaayega maati ke mol (Dharam Karam), Hamen tumse pyar kitna (Qudrat)* and more which silenced his critics and rivals.

Majrooh can easily be termed the writer for all seasons, for all moods and for all times. While on one hand, he popularised the ghazal form of writing in Hindi film songs, on the other hand, he was the first to introduce colloquialism in songs like *Sun sun sun sun zaalima, pyar humko tumse ho gaya (Aar Paar), Chal diye banda nawaz (Mr & Mrs 55), Jaata kahan hai deewane (CID), Dekho kasam se kehte hain tumse haan (Tumsa Nahin Dekha), Ankhon mein kya ji (Nau Do Gyarah), Chhod do aanchal zamana kya kahega (Paying Guest), Achchaji main haari chalo maan jao na (Kala Pani), Haal kaisa hai janab ka (Chalti Ka Naam Gaadi), Hum to mohabbat karega (Dilli Ka Thug), Are yaar mere tum bhi ho ghazab (Teen Deviyan)* and *Dekhiye saahabo (Teesri Manzil)*.

Majrooh also introduced and popularised words of endearment like *janab, huzoor, sahab, miya, banda parwar, kibla, mohatarima, dilbar* and *hamdam*.

Majrooh indeed has an enviable track record. While many of his contemporaries were no more and many of his juniors out of work, Majrooh, even at 80, was full of vigour and vitality writing for the new band of composers many of whom were even less than half his age. Songs from his recent releases like *Pukar, Kya Kehna* and *Hum To Mohabbat Karega* also hit the charts and one could see his voice throbbing with passion and face lighting up like a child while talking about them. With the popularity of songs from these films, probably he would have signed more films and written more youthful songs. But alas, the Sultan of Shaayars is no more but the fragrance of his evergreen songs will continue to linger in the air for years to come.

After all, was it not Majrooh from whose pen flowed sensitive lines like *Rahen na rahen hum mehka karenge, banke kali, banke sabaa, baagh-e-wafaa mein?* Again, was it not Majrooh who professed philosophical thoughts like *Ik din bik jaayega maati ke mol, jag mein reh jaayenge pyaare tere bol, duje ke honthon ko dekar apne geet, koyi nishaani chhod phir duniya se dol*, to the world which is now an integral part of the caravan in which he set out five decades ago?

The following immortal couplet by Majrooh perhaps sums up the beginning and end of his illustrious lyrical journey:

Main akela hi chala tha jaanib-e-manzil magar,
Log saath aate gaye aur carvaan banta gaya.

Manohar Iyer